

Original hand-written letter from American World War I soldier Jack Leister, in boot camp at the American Red Cross Base Hospital No.38 at the Jefferson Medical College and Hospital Unit #38, to his mother, postmarked October 24, 1917. (This digitized mini-archive contains 7 digital photos that show the complete letter contents including the envelope, a newspaper clipping that was enclosed by the soldier, and the letter, which is written in a "brochure-like" format, depending on how the letter was originally folded, where different sections of the letter seem to be "out of place." A Transcription of the letter:

Jefferson Base Hospital #38  
2nd Regiment Armory  
Broad and Diamond Sts.  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
Wednesday night

Dear mother,

I didn't get a chance to write much last night, so here goes for a full explanation.

We are quartered in the armory of the 2nd Regiment, and it looks like a fort or something. It covers nearly a block, and has a massive stone front like an insane asylum or a jail. I am about a two-minute walk from Joe's old boarding-house (Mrs. Jones'). Last night Leroy and I took a walk past there.

Everything is very nice--that is, of course, as nice as can be expected. I sleep in the same room with Leroy. Today Fahringer and Dietsch (the two Theta Xi men in the unit) got Seargent Plass to have Leroy and me transfered [sic] to their room. I think that is for the best. I am very glad to have Leroy with me, and so I asked to have him moved too.

Leroy is on guard duty now. I have been on police duty all day--that doesn't mean what it sounds like. It means scrubbing, sweeping, cleaning cuspidors etc. But it's all in the day's work, and I'm absolutely determined to get used to it. I also had to wipe out the urinals with a rag and do several other odd jobs. I hope to have a chance at one of the hospitals before long. Most of the fellows are taken to different hospitals every day at seven A.M. in the ambulances. Some go to the Hotel Adelphia kitchen to learn to cook.

We were examined today by Major Lambie. He said I had a broken arch in each foot, but Captain Hustead says it won't make any difference.

I can't help but feel that this experience is going to do me a world of good, tho it sure will be tough for awhile. I hope nothing will prevent my coming home this week-end, as you won't be home anyway next week. I'm in hopes that THIS experience will cure me of any chronic complaint of homesickness, tho maybe it can't be done. I feel tonight just the way I used to feel all the time I was at the University. Do you know, I don't think that my lack of success there was due to another single thing than that. But if anything ever will cure me, this will. I've made up my mind to it, and I'm going to do it.

We have lockers here, and showerbaths just like the Y.M.C.A. but no hot water. That may come later.

I'm going to try to send my bag home tonight if I can find a place. I wish I could come with it.

Well, the bugle will soon call to mess, so I'll close and tell you the rest when I get home.

Love to all,

Jack